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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [TH](#)
SUBJECT: THAILAND POLITICAL UPDATE: MARCH 30

REF: A. BANGKOK 1888

[1](#)B. BANGKOK 1844
[1](#)C. BANGKOK 1692

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Alex A. Arvizu for reason 1.4 (b) (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Over 150,000 anti-Thaksin protesters demonstrated peacefully last night in the heart of Bangkok's upscale shopping district. This morning, the protesters marched on the offices of the Election Commission where about one thousand still remain this afternoon. PAD announced that the demonstration would end this evening and that the next large-scale demonstration will not be called until April 7. However, a group of protesters remains camped in front of the Election Commission offices demanding the resignation of the Commissioners. As election day draws closer, the media is reporting pessimistic leaks coming from TRT officials worried about the party's ability to succeed in many of the single-candidate races. End Summary.

BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE MALLS

[1](#)2. (U) Over 150,000 PAD-led protesters descended on Bangkok's upscale shopping district yesterday evening. The event was boisterous but peaceful, and the much feared traffic chaos never materialized - or at least went unnoticed given the normal state of traffic in Bangkok. This looked to us like the biggest showing for an anti-Thaksin rally yet. Protesters packed the four-lane street, the median, and the broad sidewalks to listen to the usual fare of anti-Thaksin rhetoric.

[1](#)3. (C) Sensing that the mall closures and potential traffic snarls caused by the protest's new venue were weakening their support among Bangkok's shopping classes, the PAD announced an early end to the demonstration in front of Siam Paragon mall. At about 10:00am on Thursday, the remaining demonstrators (approximately 5,000) marched from the shopping district to the Election Commission (EC) to protest the Commission's failure to take action against Thaksin for allegations that he made illegal payments to entice candidates from smaller parties to run in the April 2 election. Roads and shops that had closed during the protest began reopening this afternoon following the PAD's departure.

[1](#)4. (C) Some PAD leaders announced that the demonstrations would end today and would not resume until April 7 to offer protesters the chance to go to the polls (to check the 'no vote' box) and take a break from the sweltering streets. However, Chamlong Srimuang - leader of the Dharma Army - hinted that his followers may continue their demonstration at the EC offices. By late afternoon, a group of about a thousand protesters remained in front of the EC offices. Sources in the EC inform us that the demonstrators have set

up tents, blocked all of the exits from the building, and are demanding the resignation of the Election Commissioners. They expect the number of demonstrators to grow as people begin to leave work for the evening.

TRYING IS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD FAILURE

15. (C) Signs of pessimism continue to leak out of TRT rank-and-file. The Bangkok Post today cited an unnamed TRT official voicing concern that as many as 100 of the TRT candidates running unopposed might fail to secure the 20 percent of the electorate needed to win in their districts. The source claimed that this estimate was based on results of an internal TRT survey and was confirmed with a follow-up survey. This figure is much gloomier than previous estimates with regard to the number of seats at risk. Naturally, TRT officially denied that any such internal survey was taken.

16. (C) COMMENT: Most assessments predict that 20 to 50 seats may remain vacant due to unopposed candidates failing to garner the votes of at least 20 percent of the electorate in their constituencies on April 2. The leak from TRT about as many as 100 seats going unfilled suggest growing frustration among TRT rank-and-file with the party's leadership (Reftels A, B, and C). For every note of pessimism from within TRT, however, there are matching predictions of resounding victory on April 2 from Thaksin stalwarts. Even at this late stage, both sides seem convinced they have the upper hand. End Comment.
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